

Chapter 3: Child Find

The State of Missouri ensures that the statewide system includes a comprehensive child find system that is consistent with Part B of IDEA (34 CFR §300.128) and meets the requirements to identify, locate, and evaluate all eligible infants and toddlers. It is the policy of the DESE that all children birth through age 20 who are disabled and in need of special services are identified, located, and evaluated. The lead agency, DESE, is responsible for implementing the child find system.

Child Find (§303.321)

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is responsible for ensuring that a comprehensive Child Find system is in place that assures:

- 1) All infants and toddlers in the state who are eligible for early intervention services are identified, located, and evaluated for eligibility determination and service planning as appropriate;
- 2) An effective method is developed and implemented to determine which children are receiving needed early intervention services; and
- 3) A mechanism is in place to identify the potential number of children who may not be receiving needed services.

These responsibilities include an effective statewide public awareness program to inform the families of potentially eligible infants and toddlers of the existence of the First Steps early intervention system and how to access these services. Public awareness and Child Find are linked components in the Part C system. Effective public awareness efforts reach out to potential referral sources, engage and inform them about the First Steps system, and alert them to their responsibilities related to referral.

First Steps has a brochure order form that can be used by SPOEs, LICCs, and other groups for the purpose of public awareness. The order form is available on the First Steps web page.

An effective public awareness program focuses on both internal and external audiences providing for involvement of and communication with major organizations throughout the State that have a direct interest in the First Steps system.

- Internal Audiences include all appropriate state agencies and local enrolled providers that are working with early intervention.
- External Audiences include the medical community and members of formal organizations interested in early intervention (e.g., advocates, public and private service providers, parents/legal guardians, civic, business and professional organizations, churches, child care, educators and teachers).

Child Find efforts at the state level and in local service areas include a variety of approaches designed to inform and educate families and providers about:

- 1) issues and concerns for children and their development, and
- 2) resources and contacts for information, identification, and referral.

Child Find materials include information on:

- the purpose and scope of the First Steps system;
- how to make referrals;
- how to gain access to a comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluation and other early intervention services; and
- the family's rights, opportunities and responsibilities within the state's public system.

Child Find efforts are conducted through the distribution of written materials, as well as through oral communication (e.g., radio and television public service announcements, presentations to church or community groups, etc.) Information is shared regarding: requirements of a child find system; where in each local area to refer children for evaluation for eligibility; and may include basic training on screening procedures, screening tools, and requirements for interagency coordination in relationship to Child Find.

The Role of Local Interagency Coordinating Councils (LICCs) in Child Find

A Local Interagency Coordinating Council may locate and coordinate existing services and plan a local system that meets the community's needs for locating, referring, and serving infants, toddlers and their families. Local child find efforts are supported through a variety of state-level efforts including state-level interagency agreements. These inter- and intra-agency agreements ensure that the First Steps Child Find system is coordinated with all major Child Find efforts of other state agencies, including:

- Part B, Special Education;
- Maternal and Child Health Program/ Title V of Social Security Act;
- Medicaid's EPSDT under Title XIX of Social Security Act;
- Developmental Disabilities and Bill of Rights Act;
- Head Start; and
- Supplemental Security Income Program under Title XVII of the Social Security Act.

The Role of LICCs
in Child Find

Child Find Partners

The DESE, with the assistance of the SICC, will take steps to ensure that:

- 1) There will not be unnecessary duplication of effort by the various agencies involved in the State's Child Find system under this part; and
- 2) The State will make use of the resources available through each public agency in the State to implement the Child Find system in an effective manner.

Child Find activities should reflect public and private partnerships, and be sensitive to issues related to accessibility, cultural and ethnic diversity, and diverse communication styles.

Child Find activities involve LICCs and a variety of local education, health and social service providers, families, and advocates, supported by state-level activities. In addition to the dissemination of written materials and presentations, there are a variety of outreach efforts that LICCs could implement that respond to local needs in conjunction with existing resources.

For example, LICCs may find it useful to examine the current opportunities that are available to families to obtain an early childhood developmental screening within their catchment area. Specific outreach with physicians can also go a long way to create positive relationships. These efforts may include offering early childhood screenings in physician offices for patients, or setting up displays to include printed material and videos in physician waiting rooms for parents to view.

Another option is to purchase and provide individual screening kits, together with training, to physician offices to facilitate routine and periodic screening of

all patients according to the American Academy of Pediatrics periodicity schedule. Physician “kits” with referral forms, brochures and printed information are helpful to ensure that ready access to information is available within the physician office. The LICC may want to annually host a gathering that permits them to disseminate these information kits and provide local updates to these and other key stakeholders. The “personal touch” often makes a difference in whether people will use the information provided. Some LICCs may find it important to have a designated community member who serves as their physician contact person and is responsible for periodic outreach to the medical providers in their catchment area.

Close coordination between these resources, such as Parents as Teachers and developmental screenings offered through local health departments or physician offices can help to reduce duplication of screening, and ensure that children are referred for additional assessment in a timely manner.

Child Find and public awareness efforts cover a broad range of activities and include routine protocols, such as having the SPOE send an acknowledgement letter to each referral source. This provides an excellent opportunity to reinforce referrals, and send any new information or forms to individual referral sources.